

# Hurricane Matthew

## Special Edition Newsletter



The southeastern United States has been hit hard by Hurricane Matthew as it moved very close to the coasts of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. Storm surge combined with high tide and rain has brought flash flooding and record river flooding.

When a hurricane and flooding turn deadly, it's more important than ever to abide by evacuation orders and be aware of what steps you and your loved ones can take to prepare and respond, including what to do if you need to evacuate your home with children, older family members or pets.

Feel free to remind employees that CONCERN is available to assist with emotional support and finding local resources. CONCERN is staffed 24 hours every day.

**CONCERN: EAP 800-344-4222**

### Resources

- [Google -Crisis Map](#) – use this interactive map to find information regarding weather, shelters, traffic, and more.
- [Emergency Links by County](#) – find emergency alerts and links here.
- [American Red Cross - Safe & Well Website](#) - use this link to reconnect with friends, family, and loved ones.
- [American Red Cross - Open Shelters List](#) - use this link to locate open shelters that have been set up in and around your local community.
- [Federal Disaster Relief Aid](#) - if your county has been declared a disaster site, you may be eligible for disaster relief aid. Use this link to apply.

## Let Your Family Know You Are Safe

If your community has experienced a disaster, register on the American Red Cross [Safe and Well](#) web site to let your family and friends know about your welfare.

## Hurricanes: After the Storm – Important Tips

Be careful to take certain precautions after the storm has passed. Damage to your home can have a dramatic emotional impact, and it's best to have a plan before the storm strikes for how to reenter your home. Having a plan, and being aware of certain risks, will minimize the threat of harm to you or your family.

Stay tuned to local news organizations, such as a radio or television station, for important announcements, bulletin, and instructions concerning the storm area, medical aid and other forms of assistance, such as food, water and shelter.

You may not have immediate access to your home. Emergency rescue crews, power crews and other personnel may be attending to special needs. Roads could be blocked, power lines could be down and people may be trapped and in need of assistance.

Make sure that you have current identification. You may have to pass through identification check points before being allowed access to your home/neighborhood.

Avoid driving as roads may be blocked.

Avoid sight-seeing or entering a storm ravaged area unnecessarily. You could be mistaken for a looter.

Avoid downed power lines even if they look harmless.

Avoid metal fences and other metal objects near downed lines.

DO NOT use matches in a storm ravaged area until all gas lines are checked for leaks.

Avoid turning the power on at your home if there is flooding present. Have a professional conduct a thorough inspection first.

Record any damage done to your home before any repairs are attempted.

Flooding brings with it the risk of waterborne bacterial contaminations. Assume that the water is not safe and use properly stored water or boil your tap water.

Be careful walking around. After flooding, steps and floors are often slippery with mud and covered with debris, including nails and broken glass.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2007, January 9). Once the water recedes [News release]. Retrieved May 28, 2008, from <http://www.fema.gov>

## **After a Traumatic Event: What You Can Do**

### **What You May Experience:**

The following list describes a variety of normal reactions to a traumatic event. You or others may experience some of these in the weeks following the event. These reactions are generally temporary and not of great concern.

- Recurring thoughts or images of the event
- Heightened response to loud noises, shouting or crying – easily startled
- Discomfort being alone
- Difficulty concentrating and/or deciding what to do next
- Strong desire to contact people who are important to you
- Feeling sad, scared, angry, irritable, or confused
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Physical problems—headaches, stomachaches, sore muscles, etc.
- Discomfort being in places that seem unsafe to you
- Feeling vulnerable, a loss of control
- Feeling exhausted
- Difficulty making decisions and thinking creatively
- Feeling guilty that others have suffered more than you have
- Recall of past traumas or losses
- Fear of leaving loved ones or your home
- Feeling excited and alive, or empty and depressed, or both intermittently
- Re-evaluation of your life – what’s important; what’s not

### **What To Do:**

- Talk to other people about your experiences, reactions & feelings
- Take it easy – don’t push yourself!
- Plan extra time to do usual tasks – you may be distracted and not able to function as efficiently as usual
- Re-establish your normal routine as soon as you can do so comfortably – this helps you regain a sense of stability and predictability

- Check to see if your decision-making ability has been impaired (ask for feedback on how you're doing)
- Discuss your current emergency plan with significant others and prepare for future crises
- Don't forget to eat and eat smart – avoid junk food, excessive sugar, alcohol, and caffeine
- Rest and get some exercise
- Recognize that information about the event can be upsetting as well as helpful
- Turn off your radio and television when you start to feel overwhelmed by the news
- If you are having trouble sleeping, listen to soothing music or drink a glass of milk at least a half hour before going to bed
- Reach out to help others – either through volunteer activities, donations of money or supplies, personal support to friends and neighbors

If you have been busy performing necessary tasks after the event, you may have a delay in your reactions until after you stop being busy. Recognize we may all be on different timetables, so don't expect others to handle things or be feeling the same way you do or vice versa. Be tolerant of your own, and others' reactions. If you are feeling overwhelmed, consulting with or seeing a counselor may be helpful.

## **After a Traumatic Experience: What to Do for Your Children**

Parents try their best to protect their children from tragic events. However, sometimes frightening and overwhelming events invade a child's world. Suddenly a child's vision of his/her world as safe and predictable is abruptly shattered. As a parent, you must first recognize that dealing with tragedy is a process. Ask your child what they think, know, feel or fear before offering guidance.

The following information is meant to be a guide in talking with your children, but if intense fears persist, please seek professional assistance.

Recognize that you have experienced the same event, so take care of your emotional needs first. This is critical in conveying to your child that everything will be okay. In order for them to feel safe, they need to sense that you can cope with this event as well.

Children can benefit by expressing their feelings to a parent who is genuinely listening. Listen carefully as your child recounts their version of the story including their fears and feelings. This brings them a sense that you understand their thoughts so that they can feel safe to talk more.

It is very important to let children know their feelings of fear or anger are a natural reaction to a traumatic event. Rebuild self-confidence by finding ways to praise your child for their actions, for talking with you, for sharing their feelings, for wanting to help and/or for expressing concern for others.

When conveying tragic news to children, share the facts without overwhelming your child with information. Too much information can be scary. They mostly want to know that everyone will be safe and okay. The goal is to deal with emotions first, then deal with the facts. If talking is not working, find alternate ways to help your child express his/her feelings.

Drawing pictures, writing or role-playing a positive —happy ending— can be reassuring to a child.

Include your child in future safety precautions to assist him/her in feeling safe and secure. This could include making sure the house is locked or where to meet in case there is a frightening event and you are both separated. Taking action can assist in regaining a sense of security.

If your child chooses to watch the tragic news on TV, set limits. Sit with your child and convey the stories of heroism and unity. Again, reassure your child that preventative measures are currently in force.

Re-establishing regular routines as soon as possible is helpful. Children are comforted in knowing their daily schedule is predictable.

Plan a future event (vacation, time together, family outing) and express your excitement about following through with this plan.

Recovering from tragedy is a process and through time, and with support, children will eventually heal. Talk to your children daily and affirm to them that you are there to listen and provide on-going support.

## When to Seek Help

If self-help strategies are not helping or you find that you are using drugs or alcohol in order to cope, you may wish to seek outside or professional assistance with your stress symptoms. For more information or to make an appointment, please contact CONCERN: EAP at 800-344-4222.

Source: National Mental Health Center, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA),